



You Should Know...

Simple Ways to Ease Common Pregnancy Discomforts

Being pregnant means you have many changes, and sometimes physical discomforts, which result in stress and strains on your body. You may experience some of the discomforts described below. However, there are things you can do to help ease these aches and pains.

Morning sickness can occur any time of the day, typically in the first trimester of the pregnancy. It may be worse when your stomach is empty. Eating smaller meals more frequently, drinking plenty of fluids and getting plenty of fresh air often can reduce the feeling of morning sickness. Do not drink coffee, alcohol or smoke. They can upset your stomach and can harm your baby. Also, avoid high-fat, fried foods with strong spices that can make your nausea worse. Contact your health care provider if sickness is severe or persists.

Tiredness is common in early pregnancy, but adequate rest and regular exercise can help. Try taking short naps whenever you can. Exercise can also make you feel more energetic and improve your strength.

Backaches may be eased by using a pregnancy girdle, wearing comfortable, flat shoes, not standing for long periods, sitting up straight with your legs elevated, walking and staying in shape. Back rubs, massages and moist heat are other ways for dealing with the discomfort. Be careful lifting heavy objects or children, bend your knees and use the muscles in your legs, not those in your back.

Constipation poses a problem for many women during their pregnancy. To reduce constipation, add more fiber (bran products, fresh fruits and

vegetables) to your diet, drink lots of fluids like water (6-8 glasses a day) and exercise regularly. Avoid using laxatives unless your health care provider specifically prescribes them.

Headaches can be painful, but often fresh air and exercise may be all that's needed. Getting enough rest, eating regularly and drinking six or more glasses of water daily will also help. Check with your health care provider before taking any pain medications.

Leg cramps can be soothed by trying calf stretches. Also, wear support hose and elevate your feet when resting. When your leg cramps, straighten your leg and slowly flex your ankle and toes, massage your calf, use a heating pad or soak your leg in warm water. Consult with your health care provider if leg cramps persist.

Swelling in your legs and ankles can be controlled by wearing support hose and avoiding standing for long periods. Keep feet elevated and drink plenty of water. Limit salty foods, which can lead to swelling.

If you are experiencing any unusual pains, stomach cramping or bleeding, please contact your health care provider right away. Also, please remember to always consult with your health care provider before changing your diet or exercise routines during your pregnancy.

**Sources (Fuentes): California Department of Health Services' Maternal and Child Health, Comprehensive Perinatal Services Program's Guide: "Steps to Take Nutrition" pages 31, 49
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<http://www.allaboutmoms.com>
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